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PP RUEHBZ RUEHGI
DE RUEHGI #0171/01 2120910
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P R 310910Z JUL 09
FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0997
INFO RHMFISS/AFRICOM
RUEHBZ/AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE 0185
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0290
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0300
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 0201
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0145
RUEHNJ/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA 0489
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0476
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0132
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0462
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0143
RUEHGI/AMEMBASSY BANGUI 1259

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/C
USUN FOR DMUERS
PARIS FOR RKANEDA
LONDON FOR PLORD
NAIROBI FOR AKARAS
AFRICOM FOR JKUGEL
INR FOR CNEARY
DRL FOR SCRAMPTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CARG CONTINUES TO IMPEDE THE TRAVEL OF EMBASSY PERSONNEL

REF: A. (09 BANGUI 85)
[1](#)B. (09 BANGUI 86)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On Wednesday, July 29, 2009, Management Officer and Locally Engaged Staff were stopped for two hours by Central African gendarmes outside Grimari, Central African Republic. They were on their way to the town of Alindao to deliver tools to a Self-Help Project. This is the fifth time that members of the Embassy have been stopped from traveling and the fourth time since Post has started formally notifying the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of all travel. Following an intervention by the Foreign Minister, the group was allowed to continue. The Ambassador will seek a meeting with President Bozize in the coming days to protest and discuss the state of the relationship. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Starting in late March, 2009 (09 BANGUI 85), the CARG has required that all missions notify the MFA of any travel to ``sensitive'' areas outside of Bangui (09 BANGUI 86). Though Post disagrees with the CARG's interpretation of article 27 of the Vienna Convention and has yet to receive a definition of what constitutes a ``sensitive'' area, it has dutifully notified the MFA of all subsequent travel outside Bangui, stating clearly the purpose of travel and membership of the delegation. Despite this, mission personnel are still stopped at checkpoints outside Bangui, this latest event being the fourth in as many months. Though all of the incidents have been cleared up and sometimes appear to be the result of a lack of communication between the MFA, the Ministry of Defense and the police, yesterday's incident was the result of direct orders by the Minister of Public Security, Jules-Bernard Ouande; orders that he issued only after learning that the delegation had left Bangui. Elements close to President Bozize continue to view AmEmbassy Bangui, and the Ambassador in particular, as hostile to the CARG.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Ironically, the Ambassador was at a lunch for the incoming Central African ambassador to the US, Stanislas Moussa-Kembe, when the delegation was stopped. At the beginning of the lunch, the Ambassador discussed the trip with the Foreign

Minister, General Antoine Gambi, who expressed pleasure that the embassy had a Self-Help project in his home district. He was thus very surprised when the Ambassador later took him aside privately to tell him that the delegation had been stopped. He promised to take action upon his return to his office. In the interim, POLOFF learned from the traveling party that they had been stopped on the direct orders of Minister Ouande. When asked by telephone for an explanation for the hold up, Minister Ouande told POLOFF that American diplomats, ``cannot presume to travel were they wish in the country. In no other country are diplomats allowed to travel freely without permission.'' When POLOFF replied that the MFA had been notified of the specifics of the trip, Ouande angrily suggested that Post check with the MFA and then proceeded to hang up the phone without further discussion (Widely known to drink heavily, the Minister sounded very inebriated on the phone).

14. (SBU) The Ambassador was told by Mousa-Kembe that he, Mousa-Kembe, had recently been called from the airport at 0630 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as the airport authorities were reluctant to allow the Ambassador to board a UN flight to Obo, CAR. The Ambassador was travelling with various UN officials and the French military attache to Obo to meet with Congolese refugees and assess the threat from incursions by the Lord's Resistance Army (It is not exactly clear why Moussa-Kembe was called, as he was the Chief of Protocol at the time, but it is interesting that the Ambassador was unaware of the difficulties).

15. (SBU) COMMENT: AmEmbassy Bangui has made it a point to travel widely in the CAR so as to be as informed as possible in a little understood country with few reliable media outlets. It is clear that GARG dislikes this, especially following the

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Ambassador's visit to Ndele which found evidence that suggests that the CARG forces had executed some twenty people in the village of Sokumba. It is clear that Minister Ouande and other close advisors to the president do not think it appropriate/do not want the U.S. Embassy to look too closely at state of the CAR and this is hindering the work of the Embassy. (Note: Minister Ouande, who is extremely close to the Bozize, is the president's known hatchet man and is notorious for his indiscriminant and impulsive arrests of innocents. Posted as a junior diplomat for some six years in the former Yugoslavia, Ouande is evidently still an adherent to the old communist belief that diplomats are not supposed to look too deeply into the affairs of host nations [Interestingly, Mousa-Kembe was First Secretary at the CAR embassy in Belgrade at the time]). Continued efforts to restrict embassy travel will be a major issue as the CAR moves towards elections. Therefore, the Ambassador will seek a meeting with President Bozize to reiterate the range of U.S. assistance and engagement in the CAR, outline our efforts in support of the upcoming elections, and protest the harassment of Embassy staff. END COMMENT.
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